

PORTUGAL CUSTOMS

Greetings:

A warm, firm handshake is an appropriate greeting for anyone, although some Portuguese prefer lighter handshakes.

Friends often hug. Among relatives and friends—and sometimes even new acquaintances—men and women give other women *beijinhos* (little kisses) on each cheek, beginning with the right. Often when people give *beijinhos*, they brush cheeks and kiss the air. Children are expected to kiss adults in the extended family when greeting them. The person arriving is expected to greet first.

Touching is a common part of greeting because it shows friendship. Greeting strangers passing in the street is done in small villages but not in bigger towns or cities.

Common greetings include *Olá* (Hello), *Bom dia* (Good day), *Boa tarde* (Good afternoon), and *Boa noite* (“Good evening” or “Good night”). *Adeus* (Good-bye), *Por favor* (Please), and *Obrigado* (Thank you) are also used.

Gestures:

To beckon, one waves all fingers with the palm facing up. It is impolite to point directly at a person with the index finger.

Pinching the earlobe and shaking it gently while raising the eyebrows means something (a meal, for instance) is really good. Pulling down the skin just below the eye with the index finger can mean “You are perceptive” or “You are kidding me.” Spreading the fingers, palm down, and rocking the hand means “More or less.” Rubbing the thumb against the first two fingers with the palm facing up signifies money. Touching the tips of all fingers to the tip of the thumb with the palm facing up signifies fear or cowardice. Making a “V” sign or “rabbit ears” with the arm raised means “victory”; however, doing so behind someone's head constitutes a serious insult because it connotes a lack of morals.

Holidays:

National holidays in Portugal include New Year's Day, Easter (including Good Friday), Anniversary of the Revolution (25 Apr.), Labor Day (1 May), Corpus Christi (in June), National Day of Portugal (10 June), Assumption (15 Aug.), Proclamation of the Republic (5 Oct.), All Saints' Day (1 Nov.), Independence Day (1 Dec.), Day of the Immaculate Conception (8 Dec.), and Christmas.

On National Day, the poet Luís de Camões is honored and the Portuguese communities scattered abroad are remembered. Throughout the year, local festivals honor patron saints or celebrate such events as the harvest. *Carnaval* is celebrated for five days before Ash Wednesday and includes locally sponsored parades, children dressing up in costumes, and dances at clubs and recreation halls.